



April 2003  
Issue No. 48

# Monthly Briefing

*A Summary of the Alliance's Recent and Upcoming Activities and Important Water News*

## Raley, Keys Focus On Major Issues



*Assistant Interior Secretary  
Bennett Raley*

### USBR Defining Role, Assistant Secretary Says

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation will be making a self examination as part of President Bush's fiscal 2004 budget request.

So said Assistant Interior Secretary Bennett Raley who addressed the Family Farm Alliance's 15th Annual Meeting and Conference on March 7 in Las Vegas.

"The philosophy behind President Bush's 2004 budget request for the Bur-  
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*Reclamation Commissioner  
John W. Keys*

### Security A Top Concern, Says Commissioner

Evaluating security and improving protection is a top concern for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Commissioner John W. Keys says.

"After 9/11 we had to go look at security needs for 348 major dams and 58 power projects along with examining critical infrastructure and urban areas downstream," he said.

He told the Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting  
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## Advisory Panel Reports From Around West

Another year of significant federal water issues and activities around the West have been reported by Family Farm Alliance Advisory Committee members.

Committee members met in Las Vegas March 5, on the afternoon before the Alliance's 15th Annual Meeting and Conference officially began. The Western review is an Alliance tradition.

"The Family Farm Alliance's greatest strength may well be its grassroots organization," said Executive Director Craig Smith.  
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# Attendance Soars At Conference

Interest and participation in the Family Farm Alliance's review of Western water issues has never been greater than it was during the Alliance's 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Conference.

The March 6-7 program at the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas (Nevada) attracted a total of 171 registered participants.

Along with listening to and taking part in the many timely and informative presentations and discussions, those attending had numerous opportunities to visit one on one with speakers, many of whom were federal agency leaders and decision makers, and with fellow registrants.

"It's what help makes the Family Farm Alliance so unique and effective," said Executive Director Craig Smith. "Any way you look at it, this was a terrific conference."



Dozens of door prizes were donated. Drawing numbers and presenting gifts are Family Farm Alliance Executive Director Craig Smith and Grassroots Communications Director Kristina Smith.



Members of the Family Farm Alliance Board of Directors who were present at a board meeting that concluded the Annual meeting included (front row, from left) Jim Lundgren (Nebraska), Judith Brown (California), Dan Errotabere (California), Chris Hurd (California) and Don Schwindt (Colorado). Top Row — C.L. "Bill" Scott (Arizona), President Bill Kennedy (Oregon), Mark Ricks (Idaho) and Harvey Bailey (California) A snowstorm prevented Director Patrick O'Toole (Wyoming) from attending.

## Alliance Gains Two New Advisory Panel Members

The Family Farm Alliance has a pair of new members on its important Advisory Committee.

They are Dan Keppen, Klamath Water Users Association (Oregon) Executive Director, and Marc Catlin of the Uncompahgre Valley Water Users (Colorado) Manager.

Their appointments bring the Advisory Committee's membership to 23. Others include Chairman Richard Moss (California), Steve Arveschoug (Colorado), Mark Atlas (California), Floyd Baham (Utah), Randy Bingham (Idaho), Pat Boss, (Washington), Tom Davis (New Mexico), Gary Esslinger (New Mexico) Jim Flowers (Wyoming), Norman Haak (North Dakota), Sheldon Jones (Arizona), Tom Knutson (Nebraska), Jamie Mills (Nevada), Wade Noble (Arizona), Kelly Spiering (Wyoming), Norman Semanko (Idaho) Robert Stackhouse (California), Richard Stevens (Washington), John Sullivan (Arizona), Grant Ward (Arizona) and Henry Weisk (Idaho).

## Alliance Will Return To Monte Carlo In 2004

It will be a return engagement next year when Family Farm Alliance members return to the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas for the organization's 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting and Conference.

The event will take place on Thursday and Friday, March 11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

"We had overwhelmingly positive responses and comments about the Monte Carlo and are very pleased to have already been able to make arrangements to return next year," said Executive Director Craig Smith.

## Conditions In Pacific Are Key To West Drought

Water shortages are creating problems around the world but drought conditions facing many parts of the West and other portions of the nation have their origin in the Pacific's waters.

Mark Russo, Assistant Vice President and Meteorologist for Salomon Smith Barney in Chicago, told the Family Farm Alliance that climatic swings could be radical.



Mark Russo

"The generally wet period in the 1990s led producers to get used to it," Russo said. Instead, he cautioned, there is reason to believe that a trend with more dry years than wet, featuring more typically dry *La Niña* years than often (but not always) wet *El Niño* episodes, might result.

"We don't think global warming has anything to do with these dry trends," Russo said.

This year's widely trumpeted *El Niño*, a warming of south Pacific sea surface temperatures, peaked last fall. Sea surface temperatures fell through the winter. "Not all *El Niños* and *La Niñas* are the same," Russo said.

A longer-term Pacific influence is the less heralded Pacific Decadal Oscillation. The PDO was discovered seven years ago. It is also a long-term Pacific temperature fluctuation but one in which results in North American weather wet-dry swings in trends scientists feel take up to 20-30 years. A dry phase has begun, Russo said.

"For the next several decades we will likely see more *La Niñas* and more of a dry bias over the southern part of the country," he said. "In the longer term perspective it is not looking too good to return to wet conditions."

Russo said, however, "Extreme conditions cannot persist." In Colorado, for example, the worst drought ever gave way to some precipitation in February and a massive, paralyzing snowstorm in mid-March.

## Some Alternative Definitions For Ag Water Usage

By Andy Horne

*Imperial Irrigation District Director*

As we all know, water issues have been a hot topic in the Imperial Valley for some time now. Naturally, valley people have a good understanding of the significance of water. Unfortunately, much of the terminology used in the ongoing water discussions may not be familiar to the public. As a member of the IID Board of Directors, I've gotten a fairly broad education on water matters and thought it might be helpful to share these definitions:

**ACRE-FOOT** — Water measurement unit alternately described in as sufficient to supply the annual needs of one family, or two families (depending on which newspaper you read). **Note:** No reference is ever provided by the media pertaining to agricultural use, since this is not deemed relevant or significant.

**FALLOWING** — The on-farm water conservation method favored by nearly everyone living outside the Imperial Valley.

**THIRD PARTY IMPACTS** — The economic impacts of land fallowing on rural communities forced to give up water. Said impacts to easily be offset through increased job-training, enhanced unemployment benefits, plus the liberal application of smoke and mirrors. Impacts can also be reduced by eliminating "low value crops."

**LOW VALUE CROPS** — Those crops being grown with water someone else wants.

**REASONABLE AND BENEFICIAL USE** — Absolute legal and Constitutional requirement for using water efficiently, said standard applying only to the Imperial Irrigation District.

**U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION** — Part of the Interior Department, this is the federal agency created to help turn arid desert into fertile farm land and now charged with converting fertile farm land back to arid desert.

**CALIFORNIA AG ENTITLEMENT** — Water rights developed by early pioneers to be used for farming. Historically quantified in IID at 3.85 million acre/feet. Recently determined by the Interior Department to be somewhat less.

**GROUNDWATER OVERDRAFT** — 1. Depletion of sub-surface aquifers. Also 2. Condition existing in the Coachella Valley which somehow creates a binding obligation for IID to provide cheap water to Coachella forever.

**URBAN WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN** — Highly detailed and complex volumes of documents, prepared by urban water agencies like the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California which, among other things, attempt to explain why it is considered perfectly acceptable to devote one-half of all water in cities to ornamental landscaping, in the middle of the desert, in the middle of a drought.

**AGRICULTURE** — Once thought to be an essential means of providing food and fiber for the nation, now, a totally obsolete and wasteful activity engaged in by rich, greedy farmers in order to selfishly deprive cities of their rightful share of water.

*Andy Horne incorporated these personal definitions in his presentation to the Alliance.*



## How IID Views River Issue

Imperial Irrigation District's perspective on the Colorado River dispute was presented to those attending the Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting and Conference.

"IID has been trying to do a deal that would protect the Salton Sea and still make water available." said Joe

Raeder, Alliance Washington representative. "IID is opposed to the idea of land fallowing."

Imperial's role in the process that has reduced California's use of Colorado River water to the 4.4 million acre-feet specified in "the law of the

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## IMPERIAL IRRIGATION DISTRICT

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river” shows the issue’s wacky nature. “This has implications of water supply reliability for the entire Southwest,” said Raeder. “It is one of the most convoluted issues ever, in which drainage is a good thing and irrigation efficiency is a bad thing.”

The situation is a result of California’s historic Colorado River overuse and the recent full use of allocations in Arizona and Nevada. The Interior Department gave California until December 31 to enact interim surplus guidelines and related agreements on how to implement a 15-year water use phase down, of which an ag-to-urban transfer between Imperial and the San Diego County Water Authority was a part, using a model successfully used a decade earlier in a transfer between IID and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. When the transfer fell apart late last year, Interior Secretary Gale Norton cut California back immediately to its allocation of 4.4 million acre-feet.

Endangered species in the Salton Sea, which depends largely on agricultural drainage spills, helped sink the San Diego plan. Other disputes have arisen with MWD and Coachella Valley. Intense state negotiations have continued.

“IID has its back to the wall,” said William H. Swan, IID attorney of the struggle with urban southern California and its 18 million residents. Adding to the controversy was notice to IID from Norton (which Swan described as “more of a scud missile”) reallocating 350,000 acre-feet of water away from IID. That immediately sparked litigation by IID. Shaw described the situation as “the heavy hand of the federal government taking water rights without compensation.”

“All around the West you have this notion that there are higher and better uses of water that are not agricultural,” Swan said. The right approach, he said, would involve willing buyers and willing sellers, market forces and fair market values.

IID Director Andy Horne said IID’s Colorado River rights are historic, based upon the first Imperial Valley diversions in 1901 and the notion *first in time, first in right*. “The good news is we have a lot of water,” Horne said. “The bad news is we have a lot of water.” Trying to share some of its water, he added, IID has found “no good deed goes unpunished. We’re caught between the devil and the Salton Sea.”

### TEHAMA-COLUSA CANAL AUTHORITY

#### General Manager

The Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority is seeking an innovative leader to fill the position of General Manager. The TCCA is looking for a water professional that is a creative administrator with the knowledge and expertise to facilitate and coordinate canal operations. The successful candidate will represent the TCCA’s policies, programs and services with member districts, community groups, support organizations and government agencies.

Minimum qualifications for this position are a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university in Public Administration or related field, and a minimum of 5 years of progressively responsible management experience dealing the water and related issues.

Salary is commensurate with qualifications and will include a full benefit package including retirement. Employment brochure and job description are available. Requests should be directed to Human Resources Dept., Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority, P.O. Box 1025, Willows, CA 95988. Phone (530) 934-2125; Fax (530) 934-2355; Email [mhagmantcca@aol.com](mailto:mhagmantcca@aol.com). To ensure consideration please submit resume by March 31, 2003 (faxes accepted).



The “Washington Insiders” panel included (from left) Alliance Washington representative Joe Raeder, Josh Johnson, Chris Pauley and Alliance Project Transfer Council representative Joe Findaro.

## ESA Reform Is Back On Capital’s Screen

Endangered Species Act reform is likely to be considered in the nation’s capital later this spring.

The Family Farm Alliance’s annual “Washington Insiders” panel discussed that and many other issues March 6.

Improved science will probably be a key ESA issue, said Joe Raeder, the Alliance’s Washington representative. He noted the new House Resources Committee Chairman, Richard Pombo (R-CALIFORNIA), has been an ESA reform leader. Kris Polly of the National Water Resources Association said it remains to be seen if Pombo will be as outspoken since he now has to move legislation. “He will be pragmatic,” Polly said.

Josh Johnson, House Water and Power Subcommittee Staff Director, said that panel is dealing with California issues. He said subcommittee Chairman Ken Calvert (R-CALIFORNIA) is interested in water recycling and desalination as means to help Southern California “drought proof” itself.

Raeder said Congress has found consensus difficult to reach on the CalFed Bay-Delta program, and no significant appropriations have been forthcoming. Joe Findaro, who heads the Alliance’s Project Transfer Council, said the big state-federal CalFed program has run into criticism from some California conservatives and opposition from other Western states with unfunded projects.

Many other matters were discussed, including the Klamath Basin situation, leadership of committees, rural water projects, a Gila River tribal settlement, Bureau of Reclamation budget proposals and Bureau security concerns.

### The Alliance’s Other Sessions

The Family Farm Alliance’s Annual Meeting and Conference also featured:

- **Karl Dreher**, Idaho Water resources Department Director, on the state’s conjunctive use program, and effects of pumping.
- **Marvin Meyers** of Fresno County (California) on his privately developed water bank near Mendota to sustain his farm in marginal water years.
- **Robert Glennon**, Morris K. Udall Professor of Law and Public Policy at the University of Arizona, on “Water Follies,” title of a book he authored. He focused on groundwater waste, overuse, supply concerns and legalities.

# Reclamation's Regions List Their Issues

There is no lack of issues facing U.S. Bureau of Reclamation regional staffs.

Reports from each region were given to those attending the Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting and Conference in Las Vegas.

Here are a few highlights:

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## **BILL McDONALD, Regional Director**

### **Pacific Northwest Region**

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) issues related to temperatures on the Columbia and Snake rivers promise to be "the next big major issue," McDonald said. There are only two places, in a Snake River reservoir and at Grand Coolee Dam, where operational changes could be made. The Pacific Northwest Region is involved in several Section 7 consultations. A Snake River biological opinion expires this year. In the Yakima Project, there is debate over whether dams should be included in the environmental baseline. Many potentially precedent setting issues are coming to a head for the 14 dams and power plants in the integrated Corps of Engineers-Bureau project. Science continues to evolve. The state of Washington has a separate report through the National Academy of Sciences related to its portion of the Columbia River.

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## **MARIANNE BACH, Regional Director**

### **Great Plains Region**

Title transfers, drought impacts and rural drinking water are all major Great Plains Region issues, as are Indian water rights settlements, Bach said. In Wyoming, proposed enlargement of Pathfinder Reservoir is wrapped up in a complex set of negotiations and issues involving three states, including critical habitat along the Platte River. Various opportunities are being considered in Kansas and Oklahoma, she said, including the novel proposed buyout of an irrigator district's rights for recreation. The region continues to deal with international issues, such as Rio Grande treaty concerns with Mexico and a potentially precedent setting lawsuit brought by the Canadian province of Manitoba regarding movement of water from one basin to another.

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## **KIRK RODGERS, Regional Director**

### **Mid-Pacific Region**

In the shadow of many other issues, "We built a new dam and did so quietly and efficiently," Rodgers said. This was at Clear Lake (OREGON). In the Klamath Project, a new fish screen is in place, along with new gates. In Nevada, the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District has exceeded mandated water use efficiencies for two years. In California's Central Valley Project, all roads continue to lead to the Delta with all its environmental challenges and issues, Rodgers said. Consultation with fishery agencies is under way as part of CVP contract renewal efforts. After \$500 million in restoration activities and dedication of 12 million acre-feet of water to the environment over the past decade, Rodgers said, "We are starting to see a response from anadromous fish."

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## **RICH GOLD, Regional Director**

### **Upper Colorado Region**

Dry conditions have been dominating the region although storm activity increased in February (and a much bigger storm hit in mid-March). Still, Rio Grande supply prospects were listed in the 30-40% range. Elephant Butte reservoir, with a capacity of 2 million acre-feet, is expected to fall into the range of 200,000-300,000 acre-feet. Lake Powell is likely to fall 94 feet by the end of the year but will still have water in storage. A region success story is construction, after years of effort, in the Animas-La Plata Project.

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## **TIM ULRICH, Hoover Dam Area Manager**

### **Lower Colorado Region**

The Boulder Canyon Project is operating without appropriations. It has been working with its customers since the mid-1980s. A coordinating committee, chaired by Regional Director Bob Johnson (who could not be present for the Alliance panel discussion) sets direction. An engineering and operating committee is responsible for the project's budget and work plans. A technical review committee develops the work plans. Customers are involved in a two-day session each year to discuss the work plan. Ulrich said the process is working well.

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## KEYS NOTES SECURITY EFFORT, PRAISES ALLIANCE'S WORK

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and Conference at the Monte Carlo in Las Vegas that all security-related work is to be completed by 2004.

Security plans are being readied. Districts can be involved but only on a confidential basis and with full security clearance, Keys said.

Some \$30 million was spent on security in fiscal 2001 and \$24 million in fiscal 2002 with an estimated \$28 million budgeted for fiscal 2003.

"So far this is non-reimbursable," Keys said. "At some point we will have to go back and look at the contractors supplying some of that money."

**KEYS HAD WARM WORDS** for the Family Farm Alliance.

"I have known and worked with your organization since its inception," said Keys, former Pacific Northwest Regional Director for the Bureau.

"One thing the Family Farm Alliance brings us is an outside look at how we do business," the

Commissioner said. "I want to commend the Family Farm Alliance for working with us."

He noted the Alliance has been involved with issues such as operation and maintenance, budget and Warren Act charges.

**DROUGHT IS HAVING** major impacts throughout the West, except in California.

"We are trying to make water go its farthest," said Keys. "We'd be in dire straits if it weren't for our reservoirs."

The Commissioner said that dry conditions are at the heart of the Bureau's efforts in the troubled Klamath Basin to get a water bank in place.

The banked water is to be "set aside to deal with the Endangered Species Act," Keys said. "The rest we will give to the Klamath Irrigation District to manage."

**THE WESTERN WATER** Initiative is taking a look 25 years into

### **Initiative Meetings To Begin Next Year**

Reclamation Commissioner John Keys says the agency hopes to involve all water user groups in the Western Water Initiative, for which data is being collected. The first public meetings are to be held in 2004.

the future, trying to identify potential trouble spots and where the needed water will come from.

"We are trying to avoid the crisis management we got into in Klamath," he said.

Desalinization has great promise, Keys said, despite its still-high cost of \$650 per acre-foot.

"If the cost can be brought below \$600 an acre-foot, it can be competitive in California today," the Commissioner said.

## RALEY SAYS RECLAMATION WILL EXAMINE ITS 'CORE MISSION'

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eau of Reclamation is one of core mission," Raley told the session's record audience.

"The Family Farm Alliance in particular has been in the lead asking the Bureau to define its core mission," he said. "You deserve to know what the money is being spent for and how it is being spent."

**THAT CORE** mission, Raley said, includes "delivering water and power, and meeting other essential needs."

He said the latter include:

- Post September 11 security issues. "We need to make sure we protect what we have."
- Meeting Endangered Species Act demands and requirements of biological opinions in reasonable and prudent alternatives.

"We will have to make very hard choices," Raley said. "We understand this is causing concern among constituents. We regret that."

Raley said an innovative effort aimed at wastewater reuse to develop new water supplies is a good idea but has not been fully funded.

"The discipline we've asked for is that we first take care of the capital investment we already have," said Raley.

"There has not been adequate support for doing the doable things," he said. "We want to work with you on modernization and rehabilitation so we can bring them into a repayment scheme as a means you can afford."

Raley said the federal budget's proposals contain a great deal of water policy upon which users need to focus, including issues such as reimbursability and security.

The Bureau recently had its first Reclamation-wide session on the Endangered Species Act to improve its ability to deal with other agencies in formulating biological opinions.

Raley said he and Secretary Gale Norton "have very serious concerns" about processes of adjudication that never seem to be resolved. "It shouldn't take generations of lawyers to determine how much water there is," he said.

**ON THE ISSUE** of ag-to-urban transfers, Raley noted "there are basins that are now in crisis even in a normal year." With tribal and endangered species concerns melded in, "In some areas it is pretty stark. In 25 years it will be a complete disaster in a normal year."

"Our belief is that market-based transfers are inevitably the way to proceed," Raley said, although he said Interior "would oppose a national water transfer bill."

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE EXAMINES RANGE OF WESTERN ISSUES

*(Continued from Page 1)*

"The Advisory Committee best reflects the direct involvement that Alliance members have with crucial federal water issues in all parts of the West," Smith said. Some of the report highlights include:

### OREGON

Klamath Basin actions and conditions could be headed toward a similar situation as the disastrous events of 2001 in which the region had little or no water supply, said Alliance President Bill Kennedy and Klamath Water Users Association Executive Director Dan Keppen. Hundreds of growers reluctantly applied to join a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation water bank. "The Klamath Project is getting blamed for everything," Kennedy said of the watershed's environmental, water flow and endangered species disputes. Much litigation is pending and tribal disputes abound.

### CALIFORNIA

Many Central Valley Project contractors are now in their 10<sup>th</sup> interim contract, said Robert Stackhouse. The Central Valley is dealing with major water quality issues connected with last year's ag discharge exemption and development of an interim waiver plan. General Counsel Gary W. Sawyers said a recent settlement would retire 30,000 acres of drainage impacted land within the Westlands Water District, which seeks to eventually acquire and retire a total of 200,000 acres.

### WASHINGTON

Columbia River users are being hit with fishery temperature control requirements that are impossible to meet, said Richard Stevens. Reservoir drawdown proposals are also an issue. Alliance Executive Director Smith said a recently issued report suggests that there is no correlation between summertime fish numbers and the amount of flow. "The issue is 100% ocean conditions," Smith said.

### IDAHO

Valves need replacing in two dams that are more than 70 years old, reported Henry Weick. Payette River users face a doubling of operation and maintenance costs because the Bureau says the extraordinary cost must be paid in one year. Advisory Committee Chairman Richard M. Moss said major O&M costs will

become a bigger problem as projects age. Mark Ricks, reporting on a safety of dams issue, noted, "These were built as single use projects. Now, everyone has a seat at the table in all decisions" but water users are getting hit with the costs.

### COLORADO

The state's critical drought has made the public more aware of the value of water storage, said Don Schwindt. He said the Colorado Supreme Court has ruled as illegal various augmentation plans the State Engineer had been approving. Efforts are being made to solve the problem legislatively.

### UTAH

Rapid urban growth in once rural portions of the Salt Lake Valley have increased domestic water demands with urban water being delivered from what were single-purpose reservoirs.

### NEW MEXICO

The 133,000 acre-feet of storage in a two million acre-foot Rio Grande reservoir is the least ever, said Steve Hernandez. O&M charges have been doubled. Tom Davis reported a settlement in a 50-year-old Pecos River case in which the United States will not appeal a decision that water rights rest with landowners, not a district. Alliance General Counsel Gary W. Sawyers said a California judge recently ruled exactly the opposite.

## FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE

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### ARIZONA

The entire state is gripped in critical drought, John Sullivan reported. Financially, the state is in a bad position to mitigate drought effects. He said it is proving very hard to get a biological opinion to allow full Roosevelt Project operations because of the Willow Flycatcher.

### NEBRASKA

Conjunctive use continues to gain a great deal of attention. A state task force is looking at possible changes in law, Jim Lundgren reported. Tom Knutson reported southern Nebraska is very short of water.

### WYOMING

Fish and Game officials are attempting to gain unallocated reservoir water for additional instream flows for fish.

### NORTH DAKOTA

The Missouri River is very low but the Corps of Engineers has been releasing considerable water for barge traffic, said Norman Haak. He said construction on an irrigation distribution system below Garrison Dam (a 1950s project) has been shut down. Environmentalists have opposed the project.